UNDERSTANDING YOUTH IDENTITY IN A LEADERSHIP CONTEXT:

PROVIDING A VOICE FOR SOMALI YOUTH

by

Kamille Noor Sheikh

A thesis submitted to the faculty of
The University of Utah
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Science

in

Human Development and Social Policy

Department of Family and Consumer Studies

The University of Utah

August 2013

The University of Utah Graduate School

STATEMENT OF THESIS APPROVAL

The thesis of **Kamille Noor Sheikh**

has been approved by the following supervisory committee members:

Marissa Diener	, Chair	**5/22/2013** Date Approved
Russell Isabella	, Member	**6/06/2013** Date Approved
Loretta Rudd	, Member	**5/22/2013** Date Approved

and by **Russell Isabella** , Chair of

the Department of **Family and Consumer Studies**

and by Donna M. White, Interim Dean of The Graduate School.

ABSTRACT

The goal of the current qualitative study was to gain a better understanding of ethnic identity and educational and career goals among youth with refugee status in a leadership context. All participants were Somali and Muslim young adults who are involved in University Neighborhood Partners Hartland Youth Leadership Committee (YLC) program, which met weekly throughout the academic school year and focused on leadership skills, college preparation, and service activities. Focus groups, semistructured interviews, and participant observation were employed. . Questions and discussion topics for focus groups and semistructured interviews were developed from quantitative measures, including the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R), the American Identity Measure (AIM), a motivation/engagement measure and Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSMS). The focus group discussions and interviews consisted of 10 participants, 5 male and 5 female.

Results from the current study parallel the few recent studies that identify both the motivations and challenges youth with refugee status face in accessing higher education, as opposed to focusing on the mental health concerns. As well as moving the current literature forward on the topic, the study also lends to the recognition of more school and community programming aimed at this population with many potential vulnerabilities. Three major implications developed from the study: 1) need for more involvement of youth with refugee status in school activities, 2) need for more college preparation and

afterschool programming for youth with refugee status, and 3) increased awareness of youth with refugee status in the United States.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Individuals with refugee status are defined by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) as persons (both children and adults) who are residing outside their countries and who cannot return due to a well-founded fear of persecution because of their race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group (Fantino & Colak, 2001;UNHCR, n.d.). Worldwide, there are 15 million individuals with refugee status, and about 80% of refugees are women and children (U.N. Refugee Agency, 2011).

The United States is a major resettled location for individuals with refugee status. According to the UNHRC, close to 55,000 individuals with refugee status were resettled in various states in America in 2010 (UNHRC, n.d.). Utah, a major United States refugee resettlement hub, is home to an estimated 25,000 individuals with refugee status, with 99% of them residing in the Salt Lake Valley. The largest refugee communities resettled in Utah include Somali, Sudanese, and Iraqi (Utah Refugee Services Office, 2008). Utah's population of people with refugee status is very young, with the majority of resettled individuals in the 15 and under and 15-24 age categories (Utah Refugee Services Office, 2008).

In contrast to the specific meaning of the term 'refugee', the more general terms 'foreign born' and 'immigrants' are two interchangeable terms to describe individuals with no United States citizenship at birth, including naturalized citizens, lawful permanent residents, individuals with refugee status and individuals seeking asylum, persons on certain temporary visas, and persons with unauthorized or illegal status (Migration Policy Institute, n.d.). According to the latest United States Census, there are 40 million immigrants living in the United States, comprising about 13% of the general population. Utah is home to 222,638 immigrants, accounting for 8% of the total Utah population. Ninety percent of immigrants come from countries in Latin America, Asia, and Europe. The other 10% come from countries in Oceania, North America, and Africa (U.S. Census, 2010).

Youth with refugee status and recent immigrant background may share many similarities in adapting and adjusting to life in a new country and culture. These similarities may include experiencing racial/ethnic and religious discrimination from society, being a 'cultural broker' for their parents and other family members, and developing an identity during the childhood and adolescent years while combining two different cultures with potentially conflicting values and traditions. Yet, youth with refugee status differ from youth from recent immigrant backgrounds in their pre-settlement experiences and opportunities to return to their country of origin. Youth with refugee status are more likely to have experienced psychological trauma from the unstable conditions in their country of origin than immigrant youth and are less likely to have an opportunity to ever return to their country of origin than immigrant youth (Fantino & Colak, 2001; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2010).

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

More research is focused on refugee communities in the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, which are also major refugee relocations hubs, than the United States, although the United States had the highest population of individuals with refugee status among the top 10 resettlement countries for 2010 (e.g., Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2010; Tlhabano & Robert, 2007; Utah Refugee Services Office, 2008; Valentine & Sporton, 2012). The present study addresses this gap in the research by focusing on resettled youth living in the United States in the context of cultural identity and education and career goals.

One's self-concept and how it serves as a guide to interaction and experiences in life is seen as psychological identity (Erikson, 1980). During adolescence, youth go through the process of individuating themselves from their childhood identity and entering into a more independent stage in life (Erikson, 1980; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; Malin, 2011; Marcia, 1966; Phinney & Ong, 2007). Identity achievement during adolescence, seen as the final stage of childhood, is a critical process in the transition between childhood and young adulthood.

Adolescence is a period of 'normative crisis,' a time when adolescents begin to crystalize all of the aspects of their identity. The crystallization involves the adolescent melding together of both how he or she perceives him- or herself and how outsiders perceive the adolescent (Erikson, 1980). Adolescents are prompted with making choices and decisions that influence their future, which can lead to some adolescents who are unwilling to take on their expected role in society (Erikson, 1980).

The process of identity development can be disrupted when youth experience identity diffusion, where youth are unsure or unhappy with their 'role' in life and flee the process of establishing their identity. Often youth have difficulty with translating their hobbies and other activities they enjoy into potential career paths (Erikson, 1980). This can lead adolescents to become overly involved in some kind of group or clique, where their entire sense of identity is tied to the group and so they do not develop a strong individual identity. The over identification with a group can also cause the youth to become intolerant of others who are perceived as different from the specific group members. These differences may include, gender and/or cultural differences. This is a defense process leading to a potential situation of identity confusion for the youth. Youth can also develop a negative identity, meaning the identifications and roles that have been deemed as undesirable by others become part of their identity, as an indicator of rebellion (Erikson, 1980).

Another part of overall identity is the development of ethnic identity, which in terms of social psychology is "that part of an individual's self-concept which derives from [his] knowledge of [his] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership" (Tajifel, 1981, p. 255).

Ethnic identity development is a critical piece of overall identity development during the adolescent years (Phinney & Ong, 2007). In the United States, some minority groups begin to dismiss some customs and beliefs from their cultural background and focus on the integration of more 'Americanized' customs and beliefs (Erikson, 1980). Teens from immigrant and refugee backgrounds may experience this pressure at a higher level due to their limited time in their resettlement country and wanting to fit in with their school peers (Fatino & Cook, 2001).

Little research has focused on the relationship between ethnic identity and the education and career goals of minority youth (Tlhabano & Robert, 2007). The research that does exist indicates a strong sense of ethnic identity can act as a foundation for success among Latina/o and Black students (e.g., Altschul, Oyserman, & Bybee, 2006; Arellano & Padilla, 1996; Chavous et al., 2003; Gurin & Epps, 1975; O'Connor,1997). Being aware of one's cultural background and how it influences one's life has also been found to be related to better academic and social outcomes for minority youth (Carter, 2005; Rivas-Drake & Mooney, 2009).

More research is focused on the overall academic outcomes of minority youth, rather than the influence of ethnic identity development on education and career goals. Minority students' academic outcomes, high school graduation rates, and enrollment in an institution of higher education have been improving over recent years, yet there is still a major gap between White and minority students' academic achievements, including college enrollment rates (Syed, Azmitia, & Cooper, 2011; Ward, 2006).

Considering the importance of identity development in the adolescent years, there is a lack of research specifically on African origin youth when considering the

importance influence of developing a strong sense of ethnic identity and education and career goals (Tlhabano & Robert, 2007). Youth face a critical juncture in making decisions that influence their future, such as educational goals that relate to future career plans. The research focusing on identity development of minority groups including Hispanic/Latino and African-Americans does not distinguish between youth of African origin and African-American youth (Tlhabano & Robert, 2007). Often youth of African origin, such as individuals with refugee status, have only been living in the United States for a short period of time and may have experienced societal, familial, social, emotional, and academic issues upon resettlement. It is unclear how the process of identity development is influenced by these potential issues youth with refugee status face. The current study will attempt to better understand what the process of identity development is for Africa origin youth with refugee status.

In explaining why differences exist between White and minority youths' academic achievements and goals, theory driven research concerning the academic goals of White and African America youth in Western cultures have developed two main theories on the subject: status attainment tradition and the "blocked opportunities" framework (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Tlhabano & Robert, 2007).

The view among researchers working within the status –attainment theory is that educational goals among racial and ethnic minorities are related to socioeconomic factors, specifically parental resources, including education and income. Racial and ethnic minorities generally have fewer socioeconomic resources compared to White individuals; thus White individuals are expected to have higher academic goals due to the greater socioeconomic resources they are likely to have. Educational aspirations are

viewed as rational assessments of the costs and benefits of actions. Thus, material resources are critical to educational aspirations, rather than motivational dispositions. Low educational aspirations may be due to the perceived cost of education. This point of view does not include important cultural considerations or specific differences between minority youth and youth with refugee status (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Tlhabano & Robert, 2007).

The "blocked opportunities" framework explains that minority youths' underperformance arises from "blocked opportunities" due to not believing higher levels of education will result in higher socioeconomic status (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Tlhabano & Robert, 2007). As a result, minority youth might have low aspirations in terms of education because they do not expect higher education to be associated with greater economic success or higher status. On the other hand, in other cases, minority youth will overcompensate for academic disadvantages associated with being a racial/ethnic minority in the U.S., resulting in high academic achievement. The "blocked opportunities" framework is not usually applied to individuals with refugee status, specifically African-origin youth with refugee status in the United States (Tlhabano & Robert, 2007).

One exception is a recent study with Sudanese adolescents and young adults in Australia that pointed to school disruption and language difficulties as major challenges for youth with refugee status in Australia. They found that the individuals with refugee status who were highly motivated to pursue education viewed it as a route to contributing to the advancement of their homeland. They also used the situation in their country of origin as inspiration. Those who had lower aspirations identified English language

difficulties and school disruption as major challenges. Thus, they did not find support for either the blocked opportunities or the status attainment theories. That is, high educational aspirations were not driven by the goal to overcompensate for minority status, or by the perceptions of expenses and socioeconomic status (Tlhabano & Robert, 2007).

Youth with refugee status face the difficult task of integrating their national identity, racial and ethnic identity, and minority status in the United States during their critical adolescent and young adult years (Hagelskamp, Suárez-Orozco, & Hughes, 2010; Ma & Yeh, 2010; Tlhabano & Robert, 2007). Much of the current research on youth with refugee status in the United States and how their ethnic identify is related to their academic and career goals is limited (Hagelskamp, Suárez-Orozco, & Hughes, 2010; Kanno & Varghese, 2010; Tlhabano & Robert, 2007). In the United States, over the past several years the number of youth with refugee status has increased, thus the need for more focused research on this specific population (Yakushko, Backhaus, Watson, Ngaruiya, & Gonzalez, 2008).

There have been more studies concentrating on the academic goals of females and 'black youth', but there is a continued lack of studies on the education and career goals of youth with refugee status (Tlhabano & Robert, 2007; Valentine & Sporton, 2012). Exceptions include research by Tlhabano and Schweitzer (2007) and Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, and Silvagni (2010), who examined educational goals of youth with refugee status and Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) aimed their study on the relationship between school belonging and psychological adjustment among recently resettled youth with refugee status. These studies have started the transition in the literature from focusing

exclusively on mental health needs of individuals with refugee status to the education and career goals and sense of school belonging of youth with refugee status.

Tlhabano and Schweitzer ‘s (2007) qualitative study of occupational aspirations of Sudanese youth with refugee status in Australia focused on how school disruption and language difficulties associated with resettlement influenced career goals of youth before and after the resettlement experience. The authors found that the unstable conditions in the participants’ country of origin directly and indirectly affected their schooling in some way. The career goals of the resettled youth were also influenced by language difficulties upon being resettled. The participants’ refugee status itself did not influence career goals positively or negatively. The study centered on the occupational aspirations of youth with refugee status and marked an important new direction in expanding the research on individuals with refugee status by focusing on career goals instead of previous trauma or other mental health concerns. However, the study did not specifically address any other barriers resettled youth face besides language difficulties and only mentioned that youths’ refugee status did not influence career goals, not how or why this was not a contributing factor to the youths’ career goals. The proposed study aims to explore how ethnic identity of youth with refugee status is related to academic and career goals of youth with refugee status.

Another study centered on the experiences of university students with refugee status in Australia, expanding the literature on youth with refugee status in higher education using qualitative techniques (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2010). The study identified many barriers to success in higher education, such as socio-cultural factors, refugee status, resettlement, differences in education system, emotional distress,

social life, gender issues for females, and other external pressures and commitments. The article clearly identified specific barriers adults with refugee status face when entering and continuing at institutions of higher education, but the focus was solely on adults and did not emphasize the process to getting into higher education for youth with refugee status.

Kia-Keating and Ellis (2007) examined the relationship between sense of school belonging and overall mental health among Somali teens with refugee status. Their study expands the current literature on how resettled youth with refugee status are 'fitting in' and adjusting to school, which could potentially be related to their education and career goals. Participants included 76 Somali teens with refugee status attending secondary school in the United States. The study found a higher sense of school belonging was related to lower rates of depression and higher rates of self-efficacy among teen participants. Although the study had a mental health focus, it illustrated the importance of a sense of school belonging for teens with refugee status.

The goal of the study was to investigate the relationship between identity and education and career goals and motivations and barriers to higher education among members of the Youth Leadership Committee in Salt Lake City. All members of the leadership program had refugee status. Although the program participants engage in service and recreational activities, the main focus of the program is education in academic and life skills. Another goal of this study is to learn how Youth Leadership Committee can better fit the needs and interests of participants to inform future programming, as well as expanding the current literature on youth with refugee status in the context of identity and education and career goals.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

Youth Leadership Committee

Youth Leadership Committee (YLC) is an educational partnership between the Department of Family and Consumer Studies at the University of Utah and University Neighborhood Partners Hartland Center, an organization with the goal of connecting community partners to develop programming for adults and youth of the West Salt Lake City area. The aims of YLC are to help prepare youth for meaningful participation in the community and build strong relationships with youth and adults. These goals are accomplished through service activities, recreational activities, and a focus on building academic and life skills. Weekly meetings were held with youth who voluntarily joined YLC and three adult coordinators from the University of Utah.

The theme of the program for 2012-2013 school year revolved around the idea of 'identity' as many participants in the group were in the process of preparing for college, which included writing essays for scholarships and personal statements. These essays and statements required youth to write about their past experiences and future goals. Furthermore, the youth participated in a community partnership with a local art studio, which focused on teaching the youth about photography and culminated in a self-portrait.

Youth were asked to participate in semistructured interviews and focus groups throughout the course of the 2012- 2013 school year. Two to three weeks prior to semi-structured interviews and discussions, youth were informed of the activities and had the choice to participate in the activity. YLC had been meeting for close to 3 years at the time of the study. Parental permission to participate in Youth Leadership activities was obtained at the start of the program activities during the school year.

Participants

All members of YLC (*N*=10) participated in the interviews and focus groups. YLC members were in ninth through twelfth grades and ranged from 14 to 18 years of age (*M*= 16.5, *SD*= .71). Youth were Muslim and from Somali/Kenyan refugee backgrounds. Most youth were fluent in three languages, including English, Somali, and Swahili. All youth were learning Arabic in basic and advanced language courses. All the youth qualified for free lunch at school. The youth resettled in the United States from Kenya when they were between the ages of 6 and 11 years.

Procedures

The present study relied on qualitative methods. One-on-one semistructured interviews were completed with one of the three adult coordinators of YLC, and two larger focus group discussions were conducted by the three coordinators as facilitators. All semistructured interviews and group discussions were audio recorded for data coding purposes. Interviews and focus groups were transcribed verbatim by one of the adult coordinators of Youth Leadership for consistency of transcripts.

Participant observations took place over the course of 18 months prior to data collection; journaling of participants' education and career behaviors were done in preparation for facilitation of interviews and discussions and the qualitative analysis processes. All adult coordinators of the programs had a strong relationship with Youth Leadership members and had been working with all YLC members for at least 18 months at the time of the data collection. Adult coordinators met weekly to discuss Youth Leadership activities, preparation for discussion and interviews, and coding procedures.

Inductive coding, a type of qualitative coding technique, was used to examine the transcripts of the interviews and focus groups after completion of transcription of focus groups and interviews. Two adult coordinators completed the coding, meeting multiple times to discuss themes that emerged from the transcripts. Youth participants provided member-checking to ensure that the interpretation of the data accurately represented the experiences of the youth (Seidman, 2006). More specifically, near the end of data coding process, the three adult coordinators of the programs presented the youth with the themes identified and asked for the group's input on the themes identified (Krefting, 1991; Merrick, 1999; Seidman, 2006). The themes presented reflect the input of the youth.

Trustworthiness

The goal of qualitative research in the social science field is to both describe and explain the behaviors, interactions, practices, and perspectives of individuals and groups in the context of our society. Certain behaviors, interactions, practices, and perspectives of individuals within our society, including cultural phenomena, cannot be solely measured or explained with the use of quantitative methods. Therefore it is necessary to

use qualitative methods (Seidman, 2006; Williams & Morrow, 2009). The purpose of this qualitative study was to better understand the relationship between the ethnic identity and education and career goals of Somali youth with a refugee background in the context of a leadership program. Qualitative methods, such as interviews and focus group discussions, were the best fit to provide the youth participants with a medium to voice their perspectives on their ethnic identity and education and career goals.

Trustworthiness is how accurately and authentically the participants' perspectives are represented. This concept is comparable to the concepts of validity and reliability in quantitative research. Techniques to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research include gathering rich data, establishing strong relationships with participants, triangulation of data collection methods, multiple coders, searching for discrepant cases, and member-checking (Maxwell, 1996; Seidman, 2006; Williams & Morrow, 2009). To establish trustworthiness in the present study, multiple coders of transcribed data and triangulation methods using different methods of data collection, such as focus group discussions and individual interviews were employed. Finally, member checking, discussing identified themes with participants, was used after focus groups and interviews were coded (Krefting, 1991; Merrick, 1999).

Rich Data and Establishment of Strong Relationships with Participants

One of the major aims of qualitative research is to gather and appropriately interpret data regarding the perspectives of a certain population of individuals. Therefore, it is necessary to gather 'rich' data, information that provides appropriate coverage of the

topic for proper interpretation, the idea of saturation. Although there are no clear guidelines on the idea of saturation in qualitative work, Kuzel (1992) recommended six to eight individuals to reach coverage of a topic with a homogenous sample. The present study included 10 participants who were all from Somali and Muslim backgrounds. Gathering rich data requires the researcher(s) to develop a strong and trusting relationship with participants; this involves a long-term, intensive commitment on both the part of the researcher(s) and participants. To gather rich data and build strong relationship with participants, all adult coordinators of YLC had been leading the program for over 18 months at the time of the data collection and the interviews and focus group were done with participants who had been regularly attending YLC activities for over 18 months (Maxwell, 1996).

Triangulation

The concept of triangulation requires the use of multiple methods of data collection to confirm the trustworthiness of the thematic analysis. In the present study both semistructured interviews and focus groups were used to establish trustworthiness by reducing biases and eliciting a more clear understanding of the perspectives of the participants (Berg, 2008; Maxwell, 1996).

Multiple Coders of Transcribed Data

The number of researchers involved in qualitative research studies varies from study to study. The process involves multiple members of the research team immersing themselves in the data during the analysis process and then discussing similarities and

differences of themes identified to ensure appropriate coverage of the topic (Seidman, 2006; Williams & Morrow, 2009). For the purpose of this study, the two coders separately identified themes and met to discuss agreement on themes identified. This intensive process was done multiple times until saturation was reached, meaning no others themes had emerged and coders were in agreement on all themes identified (Seidman, 2006; Williams & Morrow, 2009).

Search for Discrepant Cases

To fully understand the themes and confirm how accurately the identified themes describe the perspectives of the participants, it is necessary to analyze information from the data that does not align with the identified themes. During the coding process, the coders documented discrepant cases that did not correspond with the identified themes and addressed meaning and significance of discrepant cases in the discussion portion (Maxwell, 1996).

Member Checking

Presenting identified themes to participants to provide their feedback on the themes identified, member checking or respondent validation, was also used to ensure trustworthiness of themes identified (Maxwell, 1996; Williams & Morrow, 2008). There is not a concept of interrater reliability in qualitative work completely comparable to the process in quantitative work; however, the concept of member checking best encompasses the idea of interrater reliability. Maxwell (2005) recognized member checks as one of major techniques to assure there has been no misinterpretation of the themes

identified. Member checking for the present study was completed at the end of the coding process.

Measures

Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interviews of youth participants occurred at the end of fall semester and were conducted in one-on-one settings with an adult coordinator of the program. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Questions were developed in part from participants' responses from Dawes and Larson's (2011) motivation/engagement measure, the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R), the American Identity Measure (AMI), Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSMS) and more specific questions regarding youth participants' education and career goals and how these goals relate to youth's identity (See Appendix). Questions also came from journaling and notes from prior YLC meetings.

Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions occurred twice throughout the school year, once at the end of fall semester and once in the middle of spring semester. These large group discussions related Youth Leadership activities with the concept of 'identity' of youth participants and how the program could be developed further. Topics covered included ethnic and national identity, what makes up one's identity, and how different components of identity relate to youth's education and career goals. Adult coordinators of the group moderated the discussions during Youth Leadership activities. Prior to the focus groups,

adult coordinators met to discuss potential questions and topics from the previous week's activity to inform the discussion. Discussion topics and themes were developed from participants' responses to the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised (MEIM-R), the American Identity Measure (AIM), a motivation/engagement measure and Psychological Sense of School Membership Scale (PSSMS) (Dawes & Larson, 2011; Goodenow, 1993; Schwartz, 2012; Yoon, 2011). Notes were taken by adult coordinators of the group during the discussions and all discussions were audio recorded, then transcribed verbatim.

Data Coding Process

Inductive coding methods involved the two coders reading the transcripts several times and meeting themes aligning with recommendations for trustworthiness in qualitative analysis (Seidman, 2006). Initially, the two coders separately performed inductive coding and identified important passages. Throughout the coding process, the coders searched for discrepant cases and information in the transcripts to contrast with similar patterns of information identified. After coders separately analyzed transcripts, they met to discuss initial themes that emerged from the data and similarities and differences among initial themes identified. Next, the coders grouped these initial passages into initial themes. Consensus among coders was reached when possible, and then coders revisited the transcripts. The coding of themes occurred until saturation was reached; repeated passes through the transcripts occurred until no further themes emerged (Seidman, 2006).

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Two major themes emerged from the Youth Leadership focus groups and individual interviews through inductive coding analysis processes: 1) the importance of higher education to the youth and 2) the dual nature of their ethnic identity, both benefits and difficulties. Themes emerged from several subthemes, which are discussed below (See Figures 1 & 2). Names of participants have been changed to protect their identity

Importance of Higher Education to Youth

This theme represented the youth's perceptions of the importance of higher education, including college and advanced degree attainment. Within this theme, youth's motivations and challenges to higher education emerged. All youth described attending higher education as part of their education and career goals for the future and the essential role going to college played in achieving their career goals.

Motivations to Higher Education of Youth

Youth identified several motivations to attending college. They recognized the connection between attending college and obtaining a degree in order to have better employment opportunities.

Family

Youth mentioned the importance of family as motivation to attend institutes of higher education because of the sacrifices their families had made to come to the United States. Salim described it as, "My family motivates me to stay in school and work hard." Khalid, when asked what specifically motivated him to have future goals related to attending college said, "Family is number one. If I didn't have parents I don't know where I would be right now." Samira emphasized the important role her family played in her current educational opportunities and how her future goals, "My family, they are the ones that brought me here, paid for my education and everything I have. I owe it to them to go out there and make a difference and make them proud."

Because many of the youth's immediate family members did not have many educational opportunities in their countries of origin, it was important to the youth that they take advantage of the opportunities in the United States. Khalid described it as, "Not knowing what is going to happen and my parents didn't (go to college). They went to school but they didn't have a high school diploma."

The youth also identified role models within their family who provided motivation to succeed in achieving their future education and career goals. Farooq discussed how seeing the successes of family members motivated him, "My family is what motivates me. My uncle, he graduated from college here (United States) in 2008 and right now he has a good job."

Aisha explained how her sister was a role model for her:

> My family, my mom and my parents never went to school. My sister, she is the only person, first person who graduated from high school, first person who graduated from college. Seeing her (sister) and the things she did, I can do it too.

> And it would make my family proud because that is something they never had the chance to do.

Culture

Youth emphasized culture as a motivation for pursuing higher education, specifically the significance of being Muslim. All youth described the importance of their religion in all aspects of their lives and how it related to their goals for the future. Samira expressed the importance of religion in her life in the context of her identify, "My faith defines who I am." Farooq explained the significance of being a Muslim and how it motivated him for goals involving higher education, "being a Muslim is a great thing for me because I believe in my own religion, it will take me somewhere where I want." Samira also explained how her education and career goals to be a doctor were directly related to her religion:

> My faith, in Islam, there are five branches, five pillars, and one of the branches is an Arabic word, 'Zakat', charity. It has been said that if you are a person who helps out the community then that is very beneficial for you in the afterlife. Me being a doctor is also like helping out people, the community.

Security for the Future

Youth highlighted how obtaining a degree was related to a sense of security for the future. Farooq described the importance of higher education as a way to a better life in the future, "I see most people who don't have higher education or any high school stuff, most of them don't have a good job and seeing them go through hard stuff like that is not something I want to see on myself." Attending college was perceived as providing

better job opportunities for the future. Youth expressed the desire to pursue higher education in order to create a better life for themselves and their family.

Altruism

All youth expressed the desire to give back to others, specifically in developing countries around the world; this altruism aligned with some of the youth's overall education and career goals. All youth identified that the privilege of being raised in the United States came with an obligation to help others. Both Nassreen and Samira explained how helping others, especially in developing countries, was related to their education and career goals:

> People are about to have their baby and they are sitting at home because they don't have money to go to the hospital, my own family you know. They are afraid if they will go, then where are they going to get the money from. If I can help, change people's lives, because they could be there dying while giving birth and they don't have anything. I can help people (Nassreen).

> Well, you see I have been to Africa twice and I have seen people who are sick but cannot get the help. I have been to the hospitals there; there are not a lot of people, not a lot of patients over there because not everyone can afford to get the medical help. That helped shape my goals, my education and career goals after seeing all those people who need help but cannot get it. Going out there and seeing some pieces of the world, third world countries has really helped shape my education and career goals (Samira).

Zubair identified the lack of resources in developing countries and how he would like to help people in developing countries because the privileges he had been afforded due to his resettlement in the United States:

> I come from a third world country where we don't have as much things as America does here, as in supplies or even schooling is hard there because you have to even pay for schooling no matter what because the government does not pay for children to go to school. But coming from there, I learned I have an opportunity here that I can make someone else's life better back in every other country in the world that just needs the help, no matter what it is.

Challenges to Higher Education of Youth

Challenges to higher education were also mentioned in addition to what motivates youth to pursue higher education. The challenges described by all youth included preparation for higher education, financial issues, and gender roles. Preparation for higher education included overall English skills, class choice, lack of information and knowledge about the processes associated with higher education, and expectations from family and other individuals.

Preparation

English Language Skills

Many youth mentioned how they felt their English skills could be developed further and how because of English as a second language, some educational situations were more difficult for them. Farooq explained his difficulties as, “It's hard for me because most time they speak English good (others in school environment), but me, it's hard, it's hard because it's difficult to pick up a new language and stuff.”

Class Choice

Youth also described how they found it challenging in terms of future higher education goals to take higher level courses during their high school years due to fear of failure. Samira described:

> I see myself as an outsider. I don't take a lot of challenging classes because I am afraid of failing the classes and knowing my hard work would, you know, go down the drain. So I am not ready or willing to push myself to the limits and see how far I will go because I am afraid of the outcome and where I will end up.

Lack of Information and Knowledge of Processes Associated with Higher Education

The youth preparing to enter college the next school year expressed lack of information and awareness on what the appropriate steps were to reaching higher education. Many felt that although their parents were extremely supportive, since their parents had never been through the higher education system, it was challenging for them. Youth in 9th to 12th grade often did not have specific goals for their future education and career and did not know the specific steps necessary to achieve general education and career goals, such as taking the SAT/ACT, applying for federal student aid, or researching potential colleges and universities. All youth felt they needed more college preparation offered from their school.

Expectations

Youth discussed expectations for themselves in terms of academic success in the classroom environment, overall attitude towards their academic skills, and expectations from family and others and how these expectations were related to their cultural background. Youth described their schoolwork as not up to standards compared to their peers born in the United States. Nassreen detailed what she felt about her academic skills in the context a class completely composed of White students,

> Sometimes when I am at school it's just different, you feel like, "why am I in this class." The whole class is just white, they are not Mexicans or Tongans or anything. It makes me, it puts me down, I pull myself down and I am like oh "me compared to these people, there is no way." Then, I don't know, it just makes me think of myself like, "oh you are not American, you can't." I don't know. Like you feel like, you, even though you are doing it, there are people that do it better.

Expectations of others, both family and surrounding peers were also described as a challenge. Sometimes family members wanted the youth to work to provide more income for the family, rather than focus on education. Farooq explained, "She (step-mother) wants me to, right now she wants me to work, just leave school and help her out." Nassreen, who was married and became pregnant during high school, experienced negative expectations from others because of her marriage and pregnancy.

> What people expect from me, I got married and got pregnant and people told me to my face, "you are married and you are going to have a baby soon. Your life is done, just get out of school, find a job." For now, the only people who know I can do what I want is my family and that's about it, but everyone else is like "she is done."

Financial Issues

Concerns regarding finances were also identified by youth who were preparing to enter college the next year as a challenge to higher education. Aisha described it as, "I have the motivation and support. I have everything I am supposed to, but it's the financial part that I won't be able to afford. I know my family won't be able to afford even an hour of college." Other youth who were seniors in high school explained how receiving scholarships and other forms of financial aid were major difficulties with attending institutes of higher education. Farooq described the number of scholarships he had applied for throughout the school year and how he had not received any at the time of the discussions and interviews.

Gender Roles

Gender roles, for both females and males, were identified as a challenge to higher education. Females felt they were somewhat limited in what they could do in their lives, but that this was slowly changing. They perceived that being raised in the United States allowed the females to have more opportunities than if they were living in Somalia. Aisha described it as, “Most women there (Somalia/Kenya), you are 15 and you are probably married. It is starting to change there now. A lot of women are going to school.” Nassreen explained, “most women (in the context of Somali/Kenyan cultural background), all they do is go to school and then when they finish high school, that's when they are 'we are done with school'.” Aisha discussed the process as a cycle, “I don't think back home I would have probably went to college or got an education. It probably would have just been raising a family, not that it's bad thing. I won't be that person who is stuck in a cycle.”

Nassreen also felt males in her family were treated differently, “In my family, boys, they always look up to the boys (other family members). Even if a girl, let's say didn’t work or go to school, just stayed home, then they wouldn't mind (other family members) the way if it was a brother doing it.”

Females also described how it was more difficult for them in school because they dressed differently and wore a hijab (female Muslim head covering), a major part of their religious beliefs and customs. Mina detailed how it was difficult for them in terms of the school environment compared to if they were living in their country of origin:

> Like wearing a scarf because over there (Somalia/Kenya), we are the larger population, so it's not, you can go to school and not worry what others think. But here like everybody looks at you differently and that ends up making them treat you differently.

Both males and females described how they planned on being married and having children at an early age, while they were pursuing their education and career goals during the young adult years. Mina, in discussing her education and career goals and where she would be in 5 years, stated she would be married with children by the time she was 20 years old. Salim, 15 years old at the time, also described how he wanted to be married by the time he was a senior in high school and by the time he was 20 years old would have started a family.

Dual Nature of Cultural Identity

Positives Associated with Cultural Identity

This theme represents the appreciation the youth had for their cultural background. Although the youth have a cultural background different than the majority of those in the United States, they identified benefits related to their cultural background. Youth described the sense of empathy, unique perspective, and family support associated with their cultural background.

Empathy

Their experiences of being new in every sense of the word, new to the country, new to the language, and new to the school, have given them a sense of empathy. As a result, they tried to be inclusive of others who were new because of their experiences resettling in the United States, with very limited English skills and knowing very little about the culture in the United States. Zubair detailed how his experiences of being new related to how he tried to help others who are also new to any situation:

> I'm a funny and outgoing person. At first when I came I was a shy and confused kid in the whole world, but now I am used to it. When I see someone else who is new from another country or just new to the school, even if they are still American, I try to make them fit it. I know how they feel exactly, just the way I felt when I came. The first day I came (to elementary school), it took one person saying hello to me, even though I didn't understand, to become a friend I still have to this day, who I will also respect for saying that one word, changed my life forever, Just saying "hello."

Unique Perspective

The youth also described the unique perspective they have on what they want to do with their education and career goals. The youth identified how fortunate people who live in America are because of their access to education at any level, as well as recognition of being different. Aisha explained, "I know how hard it is back home and how lucky I am to be getting an education. I knew the importance of education way before most people, I understood how important at a young age, that's how I have always know what I want to become a doctor."

Khalid also described recognizing access to education, "Kids here (United States) in class just mess around and in Africa they want an education." The youth viewed diversity as a positive thing, something more people need to recognize. Zubair described this unique perspective and how he felt people with this unique perspective could help others in developing countries,

Aisha explained how she felt her cultural background was a positive aspect of the person she was and how it influenced her goals of wanting to help others: "I have seen we are not just in this little bubble and I know there is a world beyond America. I feel that has shaped me wanting to change the world but I know it is going to be a little bit better."

Family Support

Another benefit associated with the youth's cultural background included the support they received from their family. Youth described how their family supported their education and career goals, even though many of their immediate family members were not familiar with the higher education processes in the United States. For example, Aisha explained the support her mother provided for her and how this supported her motivation for education and career goals involving higher education, "She is always supporting me, even though she can't help with school or anything, her support always makes the difference." Samira explained the support she received from her family, specifically, her parents, "Family, they are all rooting me to go to college, a university, become a doctor. That's my dream and my parents' dream."

Difficulties Associated with Cultural Identity

Youth identified several examples of difficulties directly related to their cultural background. The participants described their feelings towards the label 'refugee' and how the use of the label previously and currently influenced their identity. Prejudice from the general, non-Muslim population in school and the larger community was expressed by all youth. Also, prejudice from others within the Islamic religion was described by all youth as a difficulty associated with their cultural background.

Prejudice

All youth had experiences of prejudice within the educational setting. Many were put in English Language Learning (ELL) and English Language Development (ELD) classes, but the youth felt they did not need this kind of assistance. Their basic language skills were well developed, but many had academic struggles not specifically related to speaking or understanding English. The youth felt they could be better assisted by the school system if they were given tutors to help with their specific academic struggles versus being in English Language Learner (ELL) or English Language Development (ELD) courses. Samira discussed her specific experiences during her junior high school year:

> My ethnicity also effects my education. Back in the eighth grade, when I went to Glendale and I was registering, two of my classes apart from Language Arts, they gave me the language development learning classes, the ESL classes and then I was kind of offended. I have been here for 11 years and you give my ESL classes. I was like "can I be tested?", so I went to a new school and since I went to the principal was there, I was like "why are you putting me in ESL classes if you haven't looked at my reading scores or anything?" He was like "can you vouch that you know English very well?" I was like yeah, "I was raised here" and so I was just offended. So they tested me and then they gave me an Honors class, but still I was offended. It was not fair, they just assumed that just because my ethnicity that I needed ESL classes.

Salim described a recent experience with prejudice within the education system, not being able to choose classes that would help him better prepare for college:

> I have one of my friends, so after wanting to change his class he went to the counselor and told the counselor, "I don't want to be in this LEAD class" and he was like "oh you can go out" (the counselor to the friend) so he is not in class anymore. So the next day I asked and they wouldn't let me change and I said "how come the other kid changed?" He said, he don't know (person in charge of changing classes) "maybe he is smart."

Hakim mentioned how some teachers acted on assumptions involving race and ethnicity in the classroom setting:

> Some teachers underestimate, if I am not in class, they don't even look back. If another person is not is class, the teacher is like "hey have you guys seen Jake?" I mean I have a teacher who when a student doesn't come to class she is like "do you guys know his phone number?" I have been absent and nobody calls me. I don't understand that, some teachers will be like that, "I told you, Abdi would not come to class, I told you Mohammed would not come to class, I told you he would come in late, I told you he wouldn't get the homework done." Underestimating me because the stories (about minority youth) or color of your skin or if you are a refugee.

Youth also highlighted how the setting of where the prejudice took place in made a difference. Incidents of prejudice were more difficult to handle when occurring in the school setting rather than community settings. Aisha described how when prejudice took place within the school setting, it was more difficult for her to handle it:

> I think, me, most of the stuff that happens outside of school I can shrug it off. But then in school, because I know it's what I want to do. I want to get a higher education so if that affects me more. If someone was outside and taunted me I would just be like okay this person is crazy and walk away. But when it's school it means a lot more.

Prejudice came from multiple sources. All youth identified the prejudice they faced throughout their lives, Zubair said, "I believe as a Muslim we are looked down upon. By others that don't think Muslims are good people." The youth described prejudice from the general, non-Muslim population in everyday interactions within their overall community and school settings. Samira explained, "What happened in 9/11, the terrorists who did it were Muslim right? And then after that, how people looked at us after that, it's different, they have different perspective, thinking we (Muslims) were all involved."

Aisha expressed how she felt about being both Somali and Muslim:

> There is this guy named Bana, he says, I think all of us can relate to it, he says "I'm black and I am Muslim, everywhere I go people hate me." People think you get the best of both worlds, but here you get the worst of both worlds. Not all the time, but most of it, some of the time.

Youth also described prejudice from members of the Islamic religion, individuals who share the same religion with the youth, but were from a different country of origin. Zubair described a situation with another Muslim student, "He is Muslim too, why is he calling me terrorist?" Youth described part of this prejudice being related to differences in skin color because of coming from different countries.

Youth felt they experienced prejudice from both their school peers and the families of their school peers because of the location where the youth lived. Hakim described the differences of living 'downhill' and 'uphill', a different neighborhood than most of their school peers:

> I would go to a basketball game, have fun with them (school peers). If I had a car I would go with them and then if I tell them "pick me up," they would be like, "I don't think I can come down there." When they look down, they say you are going downhill, you take food stamps, you are a refugee. People who are going uphill, their parents work for $15 an hour, they are doctors, they have cars.

Zubair described the general misconceptions their school peers have about his neighborhood:

> I remember a kid when he asked a bunch of us, "where do you guys live?" We said "we live in this neighborhood" and he said "oh you live in the ghetto, have you ever heard gunshots?" Out of all the American kids (school peers) I have only seen one come down to our neighborhood. I went to Driver's Ed. and sometimes it's with the American kids and they ask the teacher "are we going to get shot?"

Involvement with School Peers and School Activities

All youth expressed the desire to be more connected with their peers at school and school activities, such as athletics, clubs, and student government, yet the youth felt they faced challenges to involvement, both initial and continued involvement, with peers and school activities due to their different cultural background. Nassreen explained their lack

of involvement as, “You feel like even if I do (try to get involved) they might not accept me, you put yourself down before.” All youth felt their high school was segregated by students based on their race. Zubair expressed it as:

> The school is segregated. All the Africans are together in the African hall and then there is all the Asian kids upstairs by themselves. Then when you go to the middle, the Hispanics are together, all the Polynesians are together. Because no one is stepping up and showing that diversity, everyone is just inside their own group. So it really doesn’t matter how much diversity there is, how many languages or religions there are, everyone wants to be with their own people, because they have grown up with those people and they just want to stick with that and that is how their kids and their future kids, that is how everything just becomes.

Some felt involvement with peers from school only happened during shared classes or school athletics. Aisha described it as:

> For me, it’s not in class, but outside of class, people look at me different outside of class and they don’t know who I really am. But inside of class it’s different, I feel it’s the way they (peers) look at me, because I’m covered, I’m black, I’m Muslim. Then, when we have 1st period together everyone huddles around like, my group is the biggest group. In class and with school work and that kind of stuff, they don’t look at me differently; they look at me differently when it comes to my appearance, who I am basically. Once you are outside the classroom, you don’t know the white people, you don’t talk, and you are basically with your people.

Farooq discussed his experiences being part of the soccer team, “When you are in the soccer field it’s like we are family and when the soccer is done they do their own business, we do our own business, that’s how it is.”

The lack of involvement with peers and school activities also stemmed from differences in the socioeconomic background of their families and those of their school peers. Nassreen expressed some uneasiness with peers because of her father’s low-status occupation, “You are just sitting there (during school activities), my mom doesn’t work,

my dad, they pay him $8 an hour." Hakim mentioned the lack of connection on parts of the youth and their school peers:

> I don't get involved in those things (school activities) because they might ask about your family or come up with this fee. The connection, that's why we don't get involved, they don't get involved with us because of connection, we don't get involved with them because how we feel about ourselves.

Use of the Term 'Refugee'

All youth explained what they felt the term 'refugee' was and their feelings towards the term. Farooq described the initial phases of being a refugee as:

> What it means to me is that refugee, you ran away from your home to have a better life. When you are a refugee at first, you don't have any home to live, so you need help, you need food to eat, you need to survive, you need place where you feel comfortable, to feel like you are home.

Though all youth felt they had been a refugee in the past, they did not like to define themselves as refugees. The youth felt the word was associated with a negative connotation and misconceptions. Nassreen said, "People look down on you, 'oh a refugee, you left your home.' " Hakim explained:

> All the things I have been through, I consider myself as a refugee and if people see me that way and want to call me that, I can keep that name, it's just a name they call me. Sometimes when people here say 'refugee' they think poor people, uneducated people, no knowledge, people who need help. On the other hand, the way you look at it, people say anyone could be a refugee. When people hear refugee, they are thinking about the wrong stuff. They don't think about the positive. Basically, I want to be, when a person looks at me, not the first thing they see is refugee.

Losing Culture

Although the youth described the great opportunities being resettled and raised in the United States had allowed them, they also identified some sense of loss surrounding

cultural customs and traditions because of resettlement in the United States. Salim explained: “When I came to Africa (back to visit), nothing was the same, the places I went, they all looked different. I went there to talk to my family but I couldn't talk to them because I wanted to speak English but I couldn't.”

Zubair discussed how his cultural customs were kept alive in his house, but the influence of the outside culture of the United States was still there,

> My culture at home is different from the culture outside my house. When I step out that door of my house, I am in a whole new world. While when I go into my house, I feel like I am back home in a time, back home in Africa, but then when it comes to it, I am still surrounded by all the pop culture, even in the house, the Internet, TV, video game systems.

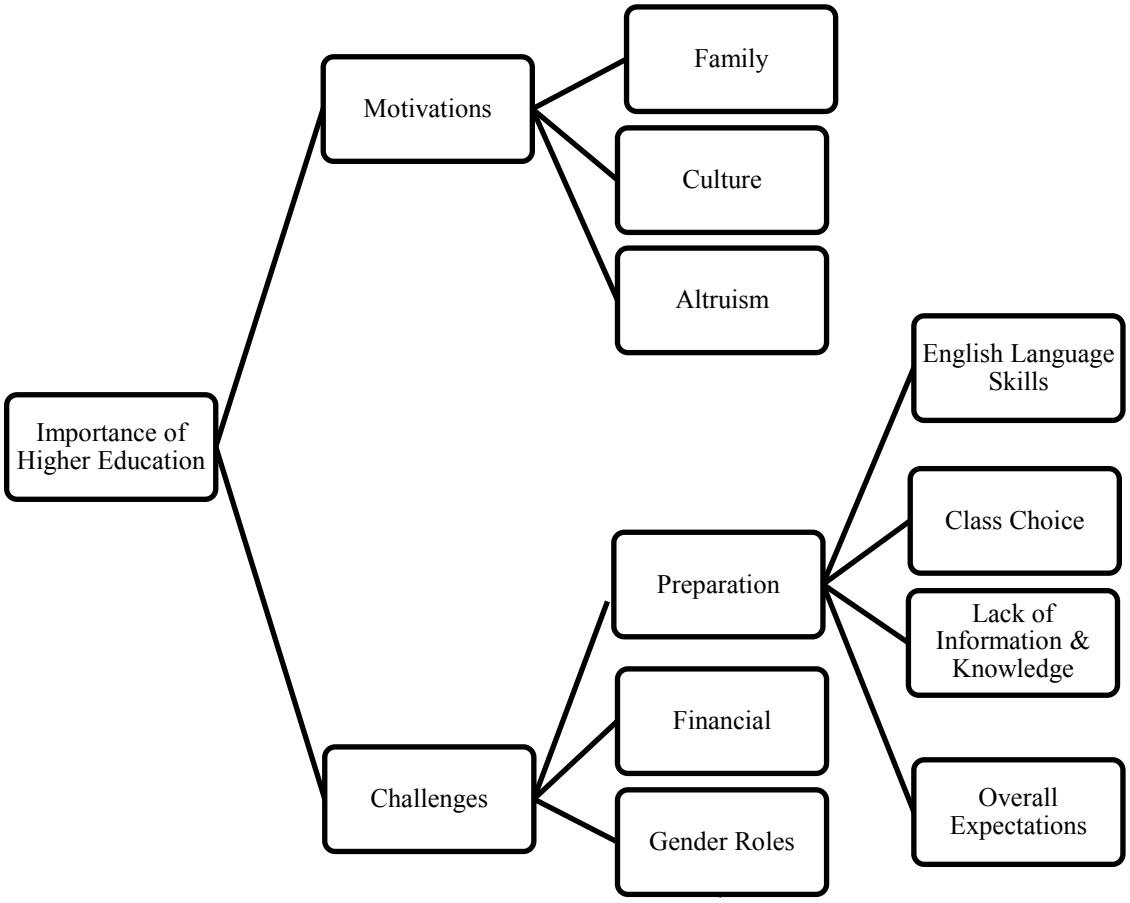

Figure 1. Importance of Higher Education

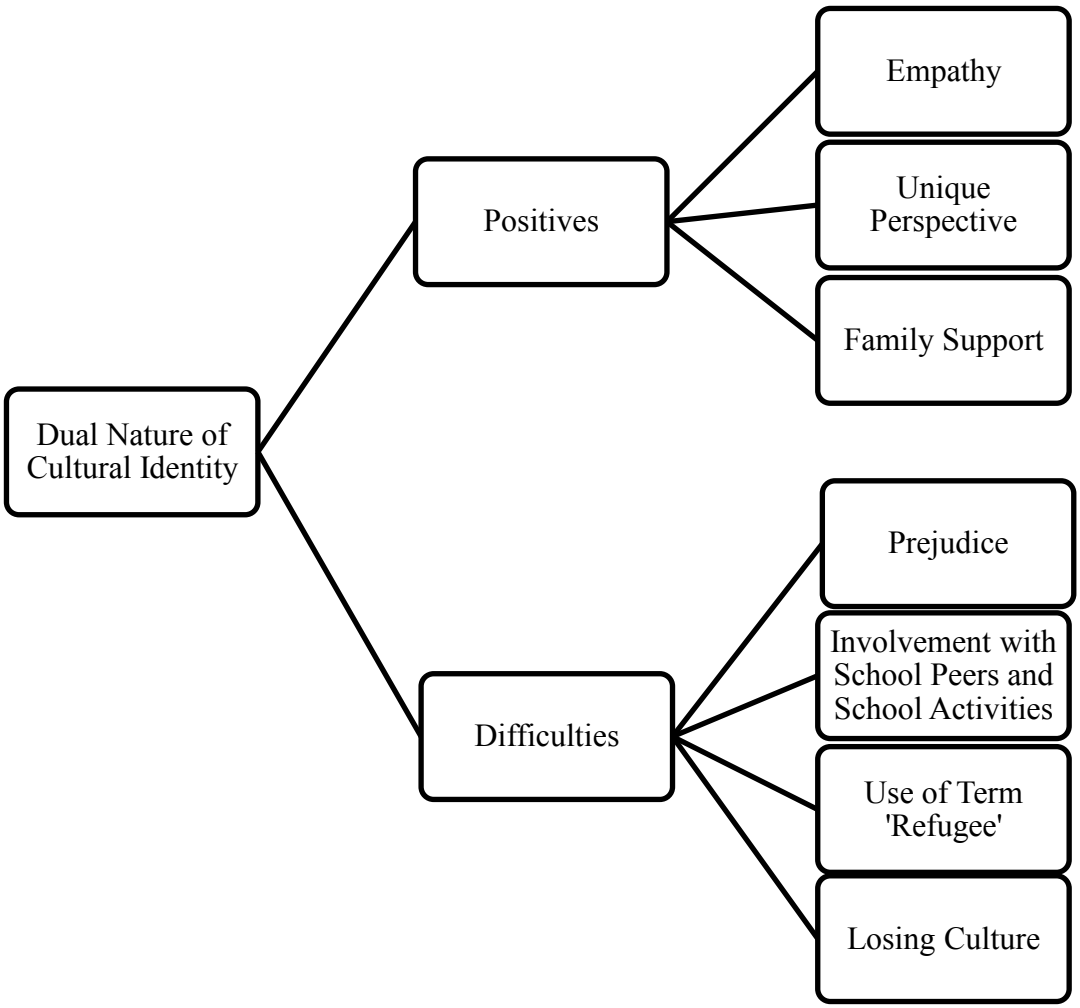

Figure 2. Dual Nature of Cultural Identity

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

The current study expands the existing qualitative literature on the education and career goals of young adults with refugee status living in the United States and their education and career goals. Results parallel the few recent studies that identify both the motivations and challenges youth with refugee status face in accessing higher education, as opposed to focusing solely on the mental health concerns (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Keating & Ellis, 2007; Tlhabano & Schweitzer, 2007).

The findings regarding the barriers to educational and career goals of youth with refugee status align with the previous work (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Tlhabano & Schweitzer, 2007). Challenges identified included being an English Language Learner (ELL), lack of academic preparation for college-level work, financial concerns, prejudice, and family expectations described by youth. These challenges are consistent with previous research on the challenges youth with refugee status may experience when preparing to enter college.

Drawing inspiration from their refugee background supports the work of Tlhabano and Schweitzer (2007) describing educational and career motivations of

Sudanese youth living in Australia. In the current study, all of the youth described their education and career goals in the context of eventually bringing their educations and skills back to their country of origin. Many explained how grateful they were to have the education and career opportunities associated with living in the United States, but how eventually they would return to their country of origin with the hope of creating opportunities for those individual living in their country of origin.

Gender issues identified as a challenge to attending college in the current study reflect the previous work of Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, and Silvagni (2010) involving difficulties of being successful during college for females with refugee status. The female participants in the current study described how they felt that not much was expected of them when considering education and career goals; many explained they were expected, in regard to their cultural background, to marry at an early age and start a family instead of attending college or even working outside of the home. Female participants felt that their male family members were held to different standards, such as if a male family member was not working outside the home or attending college, it would be a problem in the context of the cultural expectations for males, but it would not been seen as a problem if a female was not working outside the home or attending college. However, many participants emphasized this gender issue was beginning to change, in part from being raised in the United States.

Results from the current study partially support the status-attainment theory, which focuses on the relationship between the educational goals of minority youth and financial resources available to youth, such as education and income levels of parents. Since minority youth are likely to have fewer financial resources available to them, they

may have fewer goals attending college than White youth, who are likely to have more financial resources available, thus leading to goals involving attending college. Although all youth participants identified goals of attending college, family knowledge of the United States higher education system and financial barriers were highlighted by youth as challenges to attending college (Kao & Tienda, 1998, Tlhabano & Robert, 2007).

The current findings do not support the 'blocked opportunities' framework when considering the educational and career goals of youth with refugee status. The 'blocked opportunities' theory explains the low rate of minorities attending institutes of higher education as arising from the belief among minority youth that attending college is not related to better job opportunities in the future (Kao & Tienda, 1998; Tlhabano & Robert, 2007). All participants had career goals that first involved attending college. Youth in the study identified the importance of attending college and that attending college was related to better future employment outcomes and providing a better life for family members.

As well as moving the current literature forward on the topic, the study also suggests the need for more school and community programming aimed at this population with many potential vulnerabilities. Three major implications are addressed in this discussion: 1) need for more involvement of youth in school activities, 2) need for more college preparation and afterschool programming for youth with refugee status, and 3) increased awareness of youth with refugee status in the United States.

The results from the current study indicate the need for creating a better sense of school belonging among youth with refugee status, which has been found to be related to better mental health functioning (Keating & Ellis, 2007). There was an overall lack of

connection between the youth and their school; youth did not feel as though they belonged to their school community. Research has indicated the importance of school belonging for better academic, social, and emotional outcomes for youth, especially teenagers (Keating & Ellis, 2007). Youth explained their lack of involvement in school activities and connecting with peers as resulting from cultural differences between their peers and themselves. Youth described the dual nature of their cultural identity. Although they felt a sense of pride for their culture and their culture was a motivation in attending college, youth also emphasized the difficulties associated with their cultural identity, such as prejudice from peers, teachers, and school administrators. These experiences with prejudice in the educational environment led the youth to hesitate to become involved with school activities.

Issues of geographic prejudice were also described by youth as a barrier to participation in school activities. Youth described transportation issues as a barrier to involvement with school activities, as many youth did not have access to family cars, city transportation was limited, and youth were bused to school from across the city. The youth felt they were looked down upon by their peers because of where they lived. Their school peers had many misconceptions, so the youth were not comfortable asking school peers for rides after activities for school. Youth with refugee status represent a population with many risk factors, such as limited socioeconomic resources, developing English skills, and past traumas from pre and post resettlements, which are related to poor developmental outcomes for youth (Keating & Ellis, 2007). Youth attend school every day, so it should be used as a place to create a sense of belonging for youth with refugee status and could help buffer the risk factors the youth face.

Creating more of a sense of school belonging for youth with refugee status could also lead to the development of more college preparation and afterschool programming targeted at youth with refugee status. Previous literature has indicated discrimination is linked to both negative mental and physical outcomes for refugee populations (Ellis, et al., 2010). If youth feel more invested in their school community, perhaps they would be more likely to attend college preparation and afterschool programming**.** The school environment is one the first places youth with refugee status have contact out-of-home when they enter a resettlement country. Initial involvement with the school environment can either lead to positive or negative experiences for youth. Yet, as the current study shows, all youth experienced prejudice within the educational setting. This prejudice could potentially lead to the youth developing negative associations with the school environment. Previous literature has indicated discrimination is linked to both negative mental and physical outcomes for refugee populations (Ellis, et al., 2010). As a result, youth with refugee status may not ask their peers, teachers, and school administrators for guidance when it comes to academic, social, and emotional issues. Most individuals with refugee status resettled in the U.S. are under the age of 21. There is a large population of youth with refugee status in need of specific programming to buffer the risk factors most individuals with refugee status face (Keating & Ellis, 2007; UNHCR, 2010). Development of more college preparation and afterschool programming aimed at assisting youth with attending college or preparing to enter the workforce needs to be considered in the school environment, as all youth explicitly stated their goals for attending college, but also stated the need for more college preparation in order to attend and succeed in college.

There should be greater awareness of the youth with refugee population in the United States and their specific needs on community and school levels. The United States is the biggest resettlement location for individuals with refugee status, and the majority of these individuals with refugee status are under the age of 25 (Refugee Service Office. 2008). Currently, there are no specific statistics on the educational attainment of youth with refugee status, as many youth with refugee status are included with the racial/ethnic groups defined by the U.S. Census Bureau. Specifically, Somali/Kenyan youth with refugee status are included in the 'Black and/or African American race categories'. A distinction needs to be made between youth from refugee status who come from African countries and African American youth. Youth with refugee status from African countries have only lived in the United States for one generation, while African American youth have been living in the United States for at least three generations. Separating the two groups would enable better tracking of the outcomes of youth with refugee status from African countries compared with African American youth who have limited in the United States for a longer period of time. This distinction would allow the general public, as well as those in the educational setting to recognize the need for programming for youth with refugee status.

It is important to note that the current study only represents the perspectives of Somali/Kenyan youth with refugee status. As described in the literature on individuals with refugee status, their experiences vary greatly depending on country of origin (Joyce, Earnest, De Mori, & Silvagni, 2010; Tlhabano & Schweitzer, 2007). The experiences of Somali/Kenyan youth with refugee status living in the Greater Salt Lake area may not mirror the experiences of other youth with refugee status because of cultural differences,

amount of time in refugee camps, geographical location of resettlement state, and pre and post resettlement experiences.

APPENDIX

Fall Interview and Focus Group Questions

1. Think back to the first time you got started. Tell me how you got started.
2. What are your current reasons for participating?
3. Sometimes the reason someone starts an activity and the reason they continue in it are different. How have your reasons for being in the program changed since you first started?
4. Why are you motivated or unmotivated at this time?
5. What education/career goals do you have?
6. What are the steps necessary to get to these goals?
    a. Prompt: What is the first step, second step, etc.
    b. Prompt: Where do you see yourself in 5 years, what do you see yourself doing thinking of your current education/career goals?
7. What education/career goals do others (family, friends, teachers, and mentors) have for you?
8. Do the education/career goals others (family, friends, teachers, and mentors) have for you match your own education/career goals you have for yourself?
9. What are your perceptions of your overall identity?
    a. Prompt: Such as who you are and how you see yourself in terms of your culture and the surrounding American culture?
10. Has your experience as a Somali individual shaped your current education/career goals?
11. Has your experience as a Muslim individual shaped your current education/career goals?
12. Think about the things you identified in your web drawing and what you just said about your identity. How do those aspects of your identity relate to your prospective educational and career experiences?
13. Is having a different ethnicity than the majority of those in the U.S. related to your education and career goals?
    a. Prompt: How do you feel you fit in with American culture, is American culture part of your identity/who you are and how you see yourself?
14. What motivates you to have goals involving attending college?
15. What barriers do you see related to you attending college? Do you have strong sense of belonging to your ethnic group?
16. Do you understand pretty well what your ethnic group membership means to you?
17. Do you feel a strong attachment towards your own ethnic group?
18. How do you see yourself in terms of being Somali and Muslim, is it different compared to your identity as an American?

19. Do you have a clear sense of the United States and what being American means for you?
20. Do you think a lot about how your life will be affected by being American?
21. Do you participate in cultural practices of the United States, such as special food, music, or customs, in addition to cultural practices of being a Somali/Muslim individual?
22. How has being a Somali and Muslim individual shaped your life up to this point?
23. Are you included in lots of activities at your school? Do you seek out these activities and choose to participate in such activities on an individual level or is your participation influenced by teachers, family members, friends, or mentors? Are they related to your education/career goals?
24. Do other students treat you with as much respect as the other students? Do different groups of students treat you differently? Why do think this is?

Spring 2013 YLC Focus Group Questions

1. Do you feel like you are accepted at school? Do you feel like you belong and fit in with others at school?
2. At your school, do people at your school notice when you are good at something?
3. Do you feel like most of your teachers at school are interested in you?
4. Is there at least one teacher or adult in school you can talk with if you ever had a problem or needed help something?
5. Do you feel like you are included in lots of activities at your school?
6. Do you feel like students and teachers at school have respect for you?
7. Do you wish you were at a different school, if yes, why?
8. Do you feel proud for belonging to the school you attend?
9. Think about your interview last semester and the questions about why you come to YLC, what have been the main high points and low points for you in the program?
10. How committed are you to being involved in the program and where do you think this sense of commitment comes from? Why do you still come to the program?
11. Any benefits you see from coming to YLC activities?
12. What makes it hard for you to come to YLC activities?
13. If your motivation has changed for coming to the program, what happened for you that made your motivation change?
14. How do you think your experience in this program has affected or will affect your motivation in other areas of your life, such as school, work, and in the community?

REFERENCES

Altschul, I., Oyserman, D., & Bybee, D. (2006). Racial-ethnic identity in mid-adolescence: Content and change as predictors of academic achievement. *Child Development, 77*, 1155–1169.

Arellano, A. R., & Padilla, A. M. (1996). Academic invulnerability among a select group of Latino university students. *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences, 18*, 485–507.

Chavous, T. M., Bernat, D. H., Schmeelk-Cone, K. H., Caldwell, C. H., Kohn-Wood, L., & Zimmerman, M. A. (2003). Racial identity and academic attainment among African American adolescents. *Child Development, 74*, 1076–1090.

Dawes, N. P., & Larson, R.W. (2011). How youth get engaged: Grounded-theory research on motivational development in organized youth programs. *Developmental Psychology, 47*(1), 259-269.

Department of Workforce Services Refugee Services Office. (2008). 2008 In review – statistics. http://jobs.utah.gov/refugee/information/stats.pdf.

Hagelskamp,. C., Suárez-Orozco, C., & Hughes, D. (2010). Migrating to opportunities: How family migration motivations shape academic trajectories among newcomer immigrant youth. *Journal of Social Issues, 66*(4), 717-739.

Hernandez, P. R., Schultz, P., Estrada, M., Woodcock, A., & Chance, R. C. (2013). Sustaining optimal motivation: A longitudinal analysis of interventions to broaden participation of underrepresented students in STEM. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 105*(1), 89-107.

Ellis, B.H., Lincoln, A., Charney, M., Ford-Paz, R., Benson, M. and Strunin, L. (2010) Mental health service utilization of Somali adolescents: Religion, community, and school as gateways to healing. *Transcultural Psychiatry, 47*(5), November, 789-811.

Erikson, E. (1980). *Identity and the life cycle*. New York, NY: W W Norton & Co.

Fantino, A., & Colak, A. (2001). Refugee children in Canada: Searching for identity. *Child Welfare: Journal of Policy, Practice, and Program, 80*(5), 587-596.

Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology In The Schools, 30*(1), 79-90.

Gurin, P., & Epps, E. (1975). *Black consciousness, identity, and achievement*. New York, NY: Wiley.

Kanno, Y., & Varghese, M. M. (2010). Immigrant and refugee ESL students' challenges to accessing four-year college education: From language policy to educational policy. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education, 9*(5), 310-328.

Kao, G., & Tienda, M. (1998). Educational aspirations of minority youth. American *Journal of Education, 106*, 349–384.

Krefting L. (1991). Rigor in qualitative research: The assessment of trustworthiness. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy, 45*(3), 214-22.

Kia-Keating, M., & Ellis, B. H. (2007). Belonging and connection to school in resettlement: Young refugees, school belonging, and psychosocial adjustment. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry, 12*(1), 29-43.

Kuzel, A. J. (1992). Sampling in qualitative inquiry. In B. F. Crabtree & W. L. Miller (Eds.), *Doing qualitative research. Research Methods for Primary Care* (Vol. 3, pp. 31-44). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Joyce, A., Earnest, J., de Mori, G., & Silvagni, G. (2010).The experiences of students from refugee backgrounds at universities in Australia: Reflections on the social, emotional and practical challenges. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 23*(1), 82-97.

Ma, P., & Yeh, C. J. (2010). Individual and familial factors influencing the educational and career plans of Chinese immigrant youths. *The Career Development Quarterly, 58*(3), 230-245.

Malin, H. (2011). America as a philosophy: Implications for the development of American identity among today's youth. *Applied Developmental Science, 15*(2), 54–60.

Marcia J. (1966). Development and validation of ego-identity status. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 3*(5), 551-558.

Maxwell, J. (1996). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, Inc.

Merrick, E. (1999). An exploration of quality in qualitative research: Are 'reliability' and 'validity' relevant? In M. Kopala & L. A. Suzuki (Eds.), *Using qualitative methods in psychology* (pp. 25-36). Thousand Oaks, CA US: Sage Publications, Inc.

Migration Policy Institute. (n.d.). http://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/usimmigration.php

O'Connor, C. (1997). Dispositions toward (collective) struggle and educational resilience in the inner city: A case analysis of six African-American high school students. *American Educational Research Journal, 34*, 593–629.

Phinney, J., & Ong, A. (2007). Conceptualization and measurement of ethnic identity: Current status and future directions. *Journal of Counseling Psychology, 54,* 271-281.

Rivas-Drake, D., & Mooney, M. (2009). Neither colorblind nor oppositional: Perceived minority status and trajectories of academic adjustment among Latinos in elite higher education. *Developmental Psychology, 45*(3), 642-651.

Schwartz, S. J., Park, I. K., Huynh, Q., Zamboanga, B. L., Umaña-Taylor, A. J., Lee, R., & Agocha, V. (2012). The American Identity Measure: Development and validation across ethnic group and immigrant generation. *Identity: An International Journal of Theory and Research*, *12*(2), 93-128.

Scuglik, D. L., & Alarcon, R. D. (2005). Growing up whole: Somali children and adolescents in America. *Psychiatry*, *2*(8), 20-31.

Seidman, I. (2006*). Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Syed, M. (2010). Developing an integrated self: Academic and ethnic identities among ethnically diverse college students. *Developmental Psychology, 46*(6), 1590-1604.

Tajfel, H. (1981). *Human groups and social categories*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.

Tlhabano, K., & Schweitzer, R. (2007). A qualitative study of the career aspirations of resettled young Sudanese and Somali refugees. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *17*(1-2), 13-22.

United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (n.d.). http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c125.html.

Unites States Census. (2010). http://www.census.gov/population/foreign/data/cps2010.html.

Valentine, G., & Sporton, D. (2009). 'How other people see you, it's like nothing that's inside': The impact of processes of disidentification and disavowal on young people's subjectivities. *Sociology*, *43*(4), 735-751.

Ward, N. L. (2006). Improving equity and access for low-income and minority youth into institutions of higher education. *Urban Education, 41*(1), 50-70.

Wilkinson, L. (2002). Factors influencing the academic success of refugee youth in Canada. *Journal of Youth Studies, 5*(2), 173-193.

Williams, E. & Morrow, S. (2009). Achieving trustworthiness in qualitative research: A pan-paradigmatic perspective. *Psychotherapy Research, 19*(4-5), 576-582.

Yakushko, O., Backhaus, A., Watson, M., Ngaruiya, K., & Gonzalez, J. (2008). Career development concerns of recent immigrants and refugees. *Journal of Career Development, 34*(4), 362-396.

Yoon, E. (2011). Measuring ethnic identity in the Ethnic Identity Scale and the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure-Revised. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, *17*(2), 144-155.